

The Relationship of Caregiver to Work Conflict and Supervisor Disclosure with Emotional, Physical, and Financial Strain in Employed Family Caregivers

BACKGROUND

Many Americans take on the role of an unpaid caregiver, usually for their family members. These family members are often spouses or parents who cannot perform activities of daily living (ADLs) and/or instrumental activities of daily living (IADLs). Around half of American caregivers are employed. Employed caregivers often experience caregiving to work conflict (CWC), such as having to adjust work hours for caregiving duties. CWC can be seen as a secondary stressor that can lead to strain alongside the primary caregiving stressors (i.e., assistance with ADLs and IADLs). Caregiver-friendly workplaces might protect caregivers from strain by offering caregiver-friendly work policies (CFWPs) and supervisor support. The goal of this study is to examine if CWC is related to the emotional, physical, and financial strain associated with caregiving, as well as if these stressors can be mitigated by organizational factors.

STUDY METHOD

Measures. The data was obtained through the AARP/NAC 2015 Caregiving in the U.S. survey. There were 369 full-time employed informal caregivers of older adults who were aged 50 years and older that were eligible for this study. This study consisted of a four-level analysis. The first level analyzed participants' experiences with primary stressors. These stressors included the number of ADLs and IADLs the care recipient needed assistance with, the hours of care

provided, the presence of Alzheimer's or dementia, and whether the caregiver lived with the care recipient. The second level examined participants' experiences with secondary stressors by measuring the amount of CWC experienced. The third level examined organizational factors by asking participants if they disclosed their caregiving roles to their supervisor and if any CFWPs were offered by their employer. The final level analyzed the outcomes associated with these stressors and potential protective factors. In this part, participants rated the amount of emotional, physical, and financial strain they experienced while providing care using a Likert-style scale of 1 (i.e., no strain) to 5 (i.e., very much strain).

Analytic method. To determine the associations between the four different levels of the analysis (i.e., primary stressors, secondary stressors, organizational factors, and outcomes), a hierarchical ordinary least squares regression analysis was used.

FINDINGS

Overall, participants experienced a moderate rating of each type of strain. Additionally, all three types of strain were found to increase as the levels of primary (i.e., ADL/IADL assistance, hours of care, Alzheimer's or dementia diagnosis, co-residence) and secondary (i.e., CWCs) stressors increased. In relation to the organizational factors examined, there was a significant relationship found between supervisor disclosure and emotional and physical

strain. Specifically, it was found that disclosing one's caregiving role was related to increased levels of emotional and physical strain. There was, however, no significant association between CFWPs and caregiver strain.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

The findings suggest that the combination of work and caregiving roles can create conflict and physical, emotional, and financial strain for caregivers through primary and secondary stressors. Albeit contrary to previous findings, the organizational factors of supervisor disclosure and workplace policies did not alleviate the presence of caregiving strain. Instead, these results suggest that disclosing caregivers' role to their supervisors increases their emotional and physical strain. Therefore, it is important for organizations to support and accept their employees' work-life balance and various roles. With the increasing need for caregivers, policy makers should further examine the implementation of new programs to

help caregivers within the workplace, starting with the development of ways to properly support and lessen stress when caregivers disclose their roles to their supervisors.

Original Article

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